Members of Chemical Biological Incident Response Force removing chemicals in Fallujah

U.S. Marine Corps (Daniel J. Klein)

Force Protection
Lessons from Iraq

By PHILLIP G. PATTEE

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Referring to the war on terror, President George W. Bush has stated, "America is taking the offensive—denying terrorists refuge; identifying, blocking, and seizing their finances; and holding terrorists and their sponsors to account."[1] Operations *Enduring Freedom* in Afghanistan and *Iraqi Freedom* in Iraq are campaigns in this war, each with its own purpose and character. The United States and its coalition partners invaded Afghanistan because it was a haven for terrorists. Iraq was invaded for a multitude of reasons, including its sponsorship of international terrorism, possible development of weapons of mass destruction, and violation of United Nations resolutions. American leaders found these invasions necessary to national security.

With the declared end of major combat operations in Iraq, coalition forces transitioned into what joint doctrine identifies as *operations other than*

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war, and Army doctrine identifies as *stability and support operations*. Even though these monikers sound less dangerous than major combat, the United States has had more casualties since the end of major combat operations in Iraq than during them, most inflicted by ambushes and improvised explosive devices (IED).

These alarming statistics have highlighted a need for improved force protection. Coalition commanders are taking strong measures, using current doctrine and available resources to address the threat. The most visible means to enhance force protection is to improve armor on vehicles and personnel protective armor.

While these methods mirror overall Department of Defense (DOD) strategic guidance, which pursues a capabilities-based force rather than a threat-based force, commanders at operational and tactical levels must critically consider the enemies and threats

commanders must decide whether the problem is criminal violence, terrorism, insurgency using guerrilla tactics, or a combination

facing them. Carl von Clausewitz observed that "War . . . is not the action of a living force upon a lifeless mass (total nonresistance would be no war at all) but always the collision of two living forces."[2] Commanders must assess more than material solutions that render specific enemy capabilities ineffective. To improve force protection, they must determine and address not only how an enemy inflicts casualties, but also why the enemy attacks coalition soldiers.

Organized Violence

Understanding the nature of the challenge should inform decisions about how best to achieve a lasting solution. Commanders must decide whether the problem confronting them is criminal violence (such as murder, robbery, revenge, looting), terrorism, insurgency using guerrilla tactics, or a combination, as in Iraq. Measures a

commander would normally adopt for force protection and antiterrorism may not work against an insurgency, where a lasting solution requires prevailing against adaptable enemies whose goals often oppose those of the United States.

This distinction between criminal violence, terrorism, and guerrilla tactics is not always obvious because when a central authority no longer controls an area, a period of looting and general violence often follows. Reasons for loss of control vary. In some cases it is due to natural disaster and is temporary. The reasons for violence also vary. It may result from frustrations, groups seeking a share of scarce resources, or criminals taking advantage of chaos to enrich themselves.

When central authority is lacking, the violence is focused against anyone or anything that prevents the perpetrator from realizing an immediate need. Restoring basic services and ensuring that property is protected will generally quell such violence. In this scenario, the perpetrators actually have goals that coincide with the units trying to restore services and order. These perpetrators use violence as a temporary expedient. When their needs are consistently met by the resumption of controlling authority that can maintain order and provide services, they can stop resorting to violence. In this case, the violence is not directed specifically and repeatedly at soldiers. Implementing personal protection measures, as indicated in Joint Publication 3–07.2, *JTTP* [Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures] *for Antiterrorism*, should reduce the risk. Providing personal protective gear or directing soldiers to avoid dangerous zones or not go out during certain hours will likely prove effective. In an essentially random process, passive measures that reduce the probability of attacks and provide personal protection should remain effective.

Terrorism and insurgency using guerrilla tactics differ from criminal violence in that they are organized and conducted to achieve a political purpose. Victims of either terror or insurgent guerrilla attacks will not find much to distinguish between them.

Joint Publication 1–02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms,* defines *terrorism* as "the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological." *Insurgency* is "an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict." These definitions suggest a stark contrast between the two violent activities, but since insurgency uses armed conflict to overthrow a constituted government, it is also unlawful.

Terrorism is an organized violent activity as well. In the main, it aims at creating fear in large segments of a population to erode confidence in the government. In general, the goal is to change government policy or gain some concession. To have an effect, terrorism relies on government concern for the well-being of the populace. It is most effective and is employed most often against Western-style governments.

An insurgency targets governments, government symbols, and government supporters while simultaneously relying on significant segments of the population for its own support. Most insurgencies actually aim at overthrow of the current regime, so insurgents attack the government directly, using the devices and tactics of unconventional warfare. The *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* defines *unconventional warfare* as:

a broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes guerrilla warfare and other direct offensive, low visibility, covert, or clandestine operations, as well as the indirect activities of subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and evasion and escape.

Marine M1A1 Abrams returning fire in Fallujah, during Operation *Al Fajr*

1st Marine Division Combat Camera (James J. Vooris)

Targets for insurgency might be government civilian workers, military or police personnel, or government buildings. Although insurgents may attack civilians, they must discriminate between their own supporters and government supporters or risk eroding their local power base.

Nevertheless, the tactics used by each group of perpetrators look much the same to the soldier. Hence there is a natural tendency to simplify the problem and try to create an accept-

when soldiers are the objects of directed and systematic attack, strictly passive measures will fail to protect them

able solution that can be quickly implemented. Each form of violence has distinct constraints and advantages for the perpetrators that are useful for planning force protection measures.

Well-Directed Blows

Defeating terrorism encompasses *counterterrorism* and *antiterrorism*. These two concepts form what joint doctrine calls *combating terrorism*. Counterterrorism is the domain of highly trained, specialized forces working in concert with other U.S. agencies. In contrast, antiterrorism is the responsibility of every commander and encompasses operations security, personal security, physical security, and awareness and training designed to deter terrorist incidents against U.S. military personnel, their families, and facilities.

Antiterrorism tactics rely on maintaining a low profile and avoiding risky scenarios for personnel protection. Physical security measures include intrusion detection, barriers, structural hardening, access control, and response forces designed to delay the threat until security forces arrive

to eliminate it. Army Field Manual 3–07, *Stability and Support Operations*, defines *antiterrorism* as "defensive measures used to reduce the vulnerability of individuals and property to terrorist attacks, to include limited response and containment by local military forces." The goal is to make installations and personnel such difficult targets that terrorists look elsewhere. The prevailing philosophy is that terrorists seek easy targets, so if the military has defensive shields in place or avoids dangerous situations, the force will be protected. However, when soldiers are the objects of directed and systematic attack, as they may be during an insurgency, strictly passive measures will fail to protect them.

To determine what the threat to soldiers actually is and implement counters, commanders must understand the enemy's intent. For example, with Saddam's regime toppled, the U.S. military has destroyed the Iraqi state,

not in the sense of the material infrastructure, but in the sense that the social norms of order have been removed. However tyrannical, the regime was one that Iraqi society understood and that had long governed the populace. Despite the fact that coalition forces were instrumental in preserving power, water, communications, and transportation systems during major combat, the political infrastructure was destroyed. While some citizens were exploited under the old regime, others benefited. The only thing Iraqis can count on now, despite American promises, is that their society will work differently.

Those who were exploited might find promise in a new social structure, but they are a minority within larger Iraq, and without adequate guarantees for their safety and property they have reason to oppose the American vision for their country. On the other hand, those who benefited by their association with the regime might fear for their positions under the new order. Former regime loyalists, Ba'th party members, and assorted others continue to oppose American interests. Either group has reason to be uneasy about social change.

When coalition forces toppled the Saddam government, only the highest levels were effectively removed. Many leaders in lower positions, some closely affiliated with the regime and others

associated only by convenience, went into hiding. They have lost control of most of the state's assets but have never surrendered to coalition forces. Given their weakness compared to coalition military strength, they have adopted guerrilla tactics. Their presumed strategic goal is to cause losses to the coalition, in particular the United States, at a rate the American public will not sustain. The costs to Washington will outweigh the political benefits, causing U.S. forces to leave and giving the insurgents a freer hand to exert influence in the new Iraq. Even though the enemy tactics are scarcely distinguishable from terrorism where individual soldiers are concerned, the enemy might best be considered combatants or insurgents. Hence the coalition response should be different from standard antiterrorism.

As has been noted, this distinction is not always obvious because when a central authority has lost the ability to control an area, a period of looting and general violence often follows. The reasons for loss of control vary. In some cases it is due to natural disaster and is only temporary. Or violence may result from frustrations, from groups trying to get a share of scarce resources, or from individuals taking advantage of a chaotic situation to enrich themselves. Under such conditions, the violence is focused against anything prevent-

ing perpetrators from fulfilling immediate needs. Restoring basic services and providing reassurance that individual property is protected will generally quell the violence. Under these circumstances, the perpetrators have goals that actually coincide with the units trying to restore services and order, although their methods differ. These perpetrators use violence as a temporary expedient to meet needs and deal with uncertainty. When their needs are consistently met with the resumption of controlling authority that can maintain order and provide services, they stop resorting to violence. Since the hostility is not directed specifically and repeatedly at soldiers, implementing passive protection measures should reduce the risk. Providing soldiers with personal protective gear or directing them to avoid dangerous zones and going out during certain hours will most likely prove effective.

However, when soldiers are the objects of directed and systematic attack—as they may be if an insurgency begins—adopting strictly passive measures will ultimately fail to provide adequate protection. Clausewitz explains, "The defensive form of war is not a simple shield, but a shield made up of well-directed blows."[3] Counters to insurgent attacks cannot rely solely on protective armor for individuals and vehicles. This mechanical form of resistance is only a shield and is completely passive. The problem it presents to an adaptive enemy is purely technical. The enemy only has to solve a simple engineering problem to produce a counter, such as building a bigger bomb or changing its placement. To really reduce the threat to soldiers, the defense must add "well-directed blows." Soldiers must direct their blows against those perpetrating ambushes, emplacing IEDs, building bombs, recruiting perpetrators, and planning operations. Of these, the most important to individual soldiers are those perpetrators conducting ambushes and emplacing IEDs. Commanders must implement measures that give offensive capabilities to all individual soldiers and groups.

Soldiers conducting early morning raid in Iraqi village

55th Signal Company Combat Camera (James B. Smith, Jr.)

Iraqi police securing suspected insurgents detained by U.S. troops

55th Signal Company Combat Camera (Elizabeth Erste)

Improvised Explosive Devices

Understanding the challenge should inform decisions about how to achieve a lasting solution. Commanders must decide whether the problem is best approached by succeeding in a scenario, such as providing relief until

convoys that look complacent or ill-prepared to engage the enemy are the convoys most likely to be attacked

services are restored, or by prevailing over an adapting enemy whose goals differ from and often oppose their own. Events in Iraq and Afghanistan highlight the issue with the repeated use of IEDs against coalition forces, particularly U.S. Army convoys. Early in the occupation of Iraq, much of the violence was directed not just at U.S. forces, but also at other factions. As one leader who conducted patrols in the Samara area put it, "With 21 large tribes, the locals are fighting one another as much as they are fighting you."[4]

Who is committing the violence in Iraq, against whom, and why? Over time, the ferocity and size of bombs used have grown. U.S. forces are struggling to protect convoys while carrying out the daily business of stability operations. The area most affected by IEDs is the Sunni triangle, incorporating the area in the northwest part of Baghdad, west to Ar Ramadi, and north to Tikrit. The correlation of these attacks to a specific area populated by the Sunni Muslims, and to targets made up most often of U.S. Army convoys, suggests that much of the violence is an insurgency against U.S forces. The rest is more difficult to account for, and other regions of Iraq differ significantly in the level and type of violence. Some of the hostility may be designed to create and prolong general chaos to create havens for terrorist organizations to take root, or it may be posturing by local tribes and sects to assert control. Some may be simple revenge. Presented with a range of violent perpetrators with different motives, a commander must be cautious in committing to a course of action. The point is that there is no monolithic *they* in Iraq, nor is there a single type of violence, nor is there one tactic for protecting soldiers.
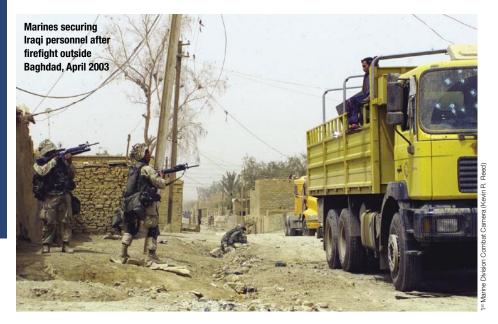
Military leaders are currently working to improve armor protection for vehicles used in Iraq and pro-

vide soldiers with personal protective armor. While important, increasing armor protection will not in and of itself reduce violence to U.S. and coalition soldiers. When the violence is generally of the criminal variety, restoration of services, not armor protection, is what will curb the hostility. In this case, restoring essential services becomes a well-directed blow—an active measure that addresses the motives of the perpetrators. An information campaign that informs the population of coalition intentions, provides instructions on how to obtain services, and presents a hope for the future is another active measure that must be incorporated alongside restoring services. Force protection is enhanced when additional measures are adopted in conjunction with armor protection.

A study conducted at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College found in wargames that, from the friendly perspective, the methodology for convoy operations was based on a purely linear progression of events. However, from the enemy perspective, the timeframe for emplacing and initiating an IED was longer than the friendly timeframes for organizing and conducting a convoy. If this is true, insurgents using IEDs are not targeting any specific convoy, but convoys in general. Once a device is emplaced, the chain of events to initiate the attack is in place. It is difficult after this to prevent an attack. The study also showed:

In many situations the enemy may decide to not initiate the IED but wait for another day or opportunity to ambush a convoy. The number of variables for the enemy determination to initiate an IED was difficult to discern—the enemy may see a change in friendly patterns and may simply decide to wait and see if the new patterns continue.[5]

What the wargaming points out is that the enemy is not suicidal. He waits for the best opportunity to inflict casualties while avoiding them himself. In vignettes written by company-grade officers coming from tours in Iraq, a pattern emerges: convoys that look complacent or ill-prepared to engage

Marines securing Iraqi personnel after firefight outside Baghdad, April 2003

1st Marine Division Combat Camera (Kevin R. Reed)

Forum

the enemy are the convoys most likely to be attacked. Those the perpetrators skip are those that appear best able to inflict casualties, not those that appear better armored.

For example, it seems that most of the convoys being hit by IEDs could have avoided the attacks by following the standard operating procedures currently in place in theater. The data for the convoys that have been hit is difficult to pull together, but some patterns emerge—again, convoys that had an "aggressive and professional" appearance were less likely to be selected. Convoys that are well organized with soldiers alert and professional are simply more dangerous; the enemy would rather wait for a less alert, more vulnerable target.[6]

Analysis shows that route surveillance and persistence of reconnaissance would generally make it more difficult for perpetrators to emplace IEDs. However, the manpower required for patrolling routes is an issue. Since friendly forces are not able to secure specific routes and close some routes based on unit manning, perpetrators have a haven within which to prepare and emplace IEDs. As the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College study showed, "IED attacks tend to occur at certain times of day when friendly convoys are on the road; those times of day when convoys and patrols

are not on the road are the critical times when the IEDs are emplaced."[7]

Perpetrators are most vulnerable when they can be distinguished from civilians. There are specific times that this occurs prior to, during, and immediately after an IED attack. When a perpetrator is sighted emplacing an IED, the soldier must engage him. During the actual ambush soldiers must return effective fire, inflicting casualties on the perpetrators. These actions increase risk to the perpetrators, which the wargames and vignettes indicate is the surest method of reducing the risk of attack on convoys. Additionally, human intelligence increases significantly after engagements where U.S. Soldiers show strength and prevail.

Forcing the Enemy to Engage

The foregoing analysis leads to some general conclusions. Aggressive and persistent patrolling will increase risk to the perpetrators and present the best opportunity to distinguish them from civilians. In an ideal campaign, the most effective strategy would be to have constant surveillance on all routes, protect all convoys with combat troops, and provide additional armor on vehicles and personal body armor. Soldiers would also actively en-

gage the populace, collecting intelligence on perpetrators while following up with raids. They would remove the unexpended ordnance used for most of the IEDs. In these ways, perpetrators have smaller havens of time to place IEDs, fewer materials to make devices, more likelihood of being informed upon, and less likelihood of surviving even a successful attack. The cumulative effects would eventually force perpetrators to build smaller bombs that could be more easily transported and emplaced in a short time. This would make personal armor and up-armored vehicles more effective at protecting forces.

But the increased safety follows improvements in offensive capability. The advantages of the defense flow from the ability to deliver well-directed blows from a position of relative safety, not from an impervious shield. Soldiers effectively engaging perpetrators at every opportunity would eventually drive them into more remote areas that are patrolled less frequently but are also inhabited by a populace other than their supporters. Ultimately, the enemy may shift to different tactics or a different target set or both.

The enemy's shift to a different target set would indicate the overall success of the defensive strategy. The coalition should expect and prepare for this. The enemy prefers ambush with IEDs to actually engaging soldiers in a firefight. Using the former tactic, the enemy inflicts casualties and receives none. Using the latter, he consistently loses because the United States has better Soldiers. When forced to engage, the enemy must therefore shift tactics or targets.

As long as the enemy remains committed to not permitting a democratic Iraq, he will continue to fight. However, unless the enemy is able to cause the coalition to back down, the plan to build a democratic Iraq will proceed. At the point where Iraqi citizens become involved in stability and security as trained policemen, attacks on U.S. Soldiers will no longer be able to prevent the drive toward a democratic Iraq. The enemy must cause the Iraqis to fail in standing up a working police force to drive responsibility for security back to U.S. Soldiers. This will

require attacks against Iraqi police stations, recruitment centers, and training centers. If that fails as well, the enemy will have to attack the elections and candidates.

If the enemy is not winning using current tactics, he must either escalate the war or quit. If the enemy perceives he is winning, he can maintain the status quo. Another of Clausewitz's themes is the idea of escalation: "If the enemy is to be coerced, you must put him in a situation that is even more unpleasant than the sacrifice you call on him to make."[8] This is what the enemy must accomplish. While the coalition has not been overthrown or forced to quit, the enemy must always fear that he himself may still be overthrown. The enemy must be made to fear this outcome. He must not believe that the coalition will adjust to his continued presence and interruptions. The enemy must be forced to bring

soldiers must deny the enemy havens for rest, planning, and training and force him to engage in firefights

more power to bear or quit. The coalition cannot allow the status quo.

Having argued that the enemy has only two choices if the coalition really presses him, it seems likely he will attempt to bring more power to bear. This is what coalition forces must be operationally and tactically prepared to prevent. Aggressive patrolling must preclude enemy attempts to train more perpetrators. Every soldier must have the ability to communicate positions and aggressively engage the enemy. Soldiers must deny the enemy havens for rest, planning, and training and force him to engage in firefights. This is where the enemy is least prepared. Reports from Iraq and Afghanistan indicate that the enemy has little proficiency in aiming his weapon. In short, in a gunfight the enemy consistently loses. He must not be allowed to change this dynamic by being granted a haven to train.

Knowing what to do and being able to do it are different matters. In a resource-constrained environment, commanders must make the diffi-

cult choices of where to accept risk. If constraints do not allow for enough trained infantry or the technology to conduct patrols for continuous surveillance everywhere it is needed, local commanders must choose where they can do it. Every soldier should be capable of such duty. One of a convoy's missions should be to seek out and engage the enemy. Resupply is coincidental to this. When the enemy begins to see convoys as proffered bait, the right kind of progress is being made. If a soldier cannot be a proficient marksman with an operational weapon, have personal protective armor, ride in an up-armored vehicle, and have a radio, then he must be given what will make him able to close and engage the enemy. A soldier with a radio who is proficient with a rifle is more of a threat than one in an up-armored vehicle. It is the threat that will force the enemy to give up his objectives.

Once a commander finds a tactic that is working, he must also abandon the idea that "if it isn't broken, don't fix it." The first indication that a tactic no longer works will be a successful enemy attack. Commanders must change routinely to keep the enemy guessing. Since the enemy chooses to remain formless, U.S. Soldiers are much more likely to capture good lessons and tactics that can be shared across units than the enemy is. For the enemy to remain hidden, he must also remain isolated. This precludes the free and easy exchange of information that will allow mastery of certain weapons and procedures. This ability to train and learn is an advantage the coalition has and should deny the enemy.

Since the enemy in Iraq has elected to continue to fight rather than lay down his weapons, we must conclude that he currently views the situation unfavorably. Coalition commanders using defensive measures with nationbuilding and offensive capabilities wisely can keep the enemy off balance, remove havens for rest and training, and force the enemy into more

risky encounters. By forcing the war to escalate to conditions the enemy cannot match, the coalition will cause the enemy to engage and be destroyed or to capitulate.

This is not a lesson just for U.S. Soldiers. Force protection is for everyone, regardless of rank, service, agency, or nation. Passive measures promoted by antiterrorism doctrine alone are not sufficient to protect the force or America. Objective evidence from Afghanistan and Iraq, theory espoused by Clausewitz, and national security strategy all support this. Nor should commanders rely on specialized forces conducting counterterrorism to protect their forces. All commanders must include active and offensive measures to reduce violence directed toward their forces. The active measures and offensive capabilities that forces exert against an adapting adversary are enablers that make passive measures more effective in the short term and are the only measures that will produce lasting solutions. **JFQ**

NOTES

[1] George W. Bush, State of the Union Address, January 20, 2004.

[2] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 77.

[3] Ibid., 357.

[4] Anonymous company commander, "Experiences of B/1–8 from September 28 to October 14, 2003" (unpublished paper).

[5] Jackie David Kem, "Annex H; Team Leader Paper," *ILE Team 7 IED Study Group Final Report* (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, February 3, 2004), H–7.

[6] Ibid., H–9.

[7] Ibid., H–7.

[8] Clausewitz, *On War*, 77.